

New England University

Faculty of Education

STUDENT TEACHER ROLE EXPECTATIONS:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPRESS
OF LECTURERS AND TEACHERS ON STUDENT
TEACHERS' ROLE CONCEPTIONS.

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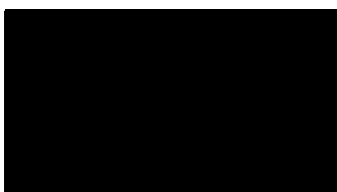
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Pensive students painful vigils keep

Sleepless themselves to give their Readers sleep!

I hereby certify that this thesis is
the sole work of the author except
where acknowledged in the text, and
has not been submitted for a higher
degree to any other university
or institution.

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory and primarily descriptive study replicated and built upon an earlier study of the author by investigating aspects of the perceived normative world of student teachers at a New South Wales (Australia) college of advanced education. A major purpose of the study was to assess the 'impress' of lecturers and practising teachers on students' perceptions of the primary teacher role. The data gathered also yielded measures of consensus and conflict on role norms amongst students and their significant others, measures of student teacher idealism about their future role, measures of the accuracy of students' role perceptions, a measure of the prevailing climate of opinion about perennially important role behaviours, and measures of the direction and nature of changes in preferred role style during practice teaching, and in student role norms over training.

The respondent groups were first- and final-year student teachers, their college lecturers, and practising teachers in the college's co-operating schools. The principal instrument used in the study was a role norm inventory for the position of primary teacher of 45 items dealing with teacher role relationships with pupils, colleagues, parents and the community. Also used was a shorter inventory to explore role style preferences. Concepts and terms drawn from role and reference group theory orientated the study. Factor analysis of responses provided a descriptive framework for trends in the data.

The present study confirmed the findings of the initial investigation. By the end of training students had moved strongly toward embracing what they perceived to be the norms held for the primary teacher role by their lecturers and away from those they perceived were held by the teachers they were about to join in the school system. Thus the growing identification

with lecturers during training was not accompanied by a similar growth in identification with teachers. Consensus on role norms for all respondent groups was apparently low for teacher/pupil and teacher/parent relationships, and potential conflict between final-year students and teachers high. To a degree, this latter reflected students' misperceptions of teachers' views. However, there were notable actual differences in role norms held by teachers and by teacher educators. That these patterns of student teacher role perception might be more widespread was suggested by a replication of part of the study at another training college where very similar results were obtained.

A small-scale follow-up of one cohort of students two years after entering teaching confirmed suggestions in the literature of the importance of role models in teaching. It was found that role identification with significant others and high commitment to teaching tended to be associated with relatively high satisfaction with teaching and thus might facilitate professional socialization.

These findings emerged against a background of burgeoning concern about teacher training in Australia. This concern is most uncompromisingly articulated in recent government-sponsored state and national inquiries into teacher education which have been as one in calling for the urgent development of closer, more organic links between teacher training institutions and the school system.
